

**Statement for Rep. Derek Kilmer (WA-06)**  
**House Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch**  
**Member Day, March 24, 2023**

Dear Chairman Amodei and Ranking Member Espallat, and Members of the Legislative Branch Subcommittee, thank you for hosting today's Member Day hearing and thank you for your work and leadership.

I am here today to talk about the work of the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress, which I chaired in the 116<sup>th</sup> and 117<sup>th</sup> Congresses. I am proud of the 202 recommendations passed in previous Congresses, including 45 recommendations that have been fully implemented and 87 that have been partially implemented, in no small part, due to the support of the Legislative Branch Subcommittee's partnership.

For the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress, the House Administration Committee has established a new Subcommittee on Modernization, and I have the privilege of serving as its Ranking Member, alongside Subcommittee Chairwoman Bice. This Subcommittee will focus on implementing the outstanding bipartisan Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress' recommendations.

These recommendations address a wide range of topics aiming to make the U.S. House of Representatives a more efficient and effective body. More specifically, our recommendations address issues related to: recruiting empowering, and retaining an experienced, skill, and diverse Congressional staff; building a more civil and collaborative Congress; strengthening lawmaking and oversight capacity; building a more modern Congress; and modernizing our workplace and our district offices. While much has been accomplished, lots of work on implementation remains. I am here to both thank you, and to outline ways your Subcommittee can continue to help.

First, I want to call attention to the significant work this subcommittee has made in driving the implementation of recommendations. In the FY2023 Omnibus bill, we were able to advance 23 Select Committee recommendations. Additionally, the increase in funding for the Modernization Initiatives Account (MIA) will continue to fund numerous additional modernization recommendations to equip the U.S. House of Representatives to better serve the American people.

Funding for the Member Representational Allowance (MRA), funding to provide paid internships and to develop an Intern Resource Office, expansion of the Student Loan Repayment Program to cover tuition assistance, and work on ensuring House staff have child care options—are critical investments in our own capacity provided for in the FY23 Omnibus as well. I urge continued strong support for these items—and again, thank you so much for your past support.

Turning ahead to FY2024, I urge you to continue level funding for this next year for the critical Modernization Initiatives Account. This account will help Congress fund the outstanding Select Committee recommendations designed to solve problems, and over time, save this institution money by reducing turnover and allowing us to complete higher volumes of work more effectively and efficiently. Worth noting, many Select Committee’s recommendations focus on where we can save money too. This includes streamlining purchases across the House and Senate, encouraging House-wide bulk purchasing of goods and services to cut back on waste and inefficiency, and driving implementation of Government Accountability Office (GAO) recommendations that will save taxpayer dollars.

Through the Modernization Initiatives Account and related report language requests I will make to this Subcommittee, I am hopeful we can fully implement several outstanding Select Committee recommendations in FY2024. This includes launching the calendar tool to reduce

committee conflicts for members so that we can actually attend more of our committee engagements and be better Members of Congress. In that same vein, the MIA could fund Select Committee recommendation to the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to construct a committee feedback tool that committee leadership could use to receive Member feedback to improve committee operations. Further, this account allows us to better serve our constituents and could be used to implement constituent-services related open recommendations. This includes recommendations to stand up a constituent engagement and services best practices hub; getting our offices better industry-leading correspondence technology tools so we can respond to constituents in a more thorough and timely fashion; allowing offices to share anonymized casework data and aggregate it to help us identify House-wide problems and trends; developing a tool to track and manage constituents' tour and flag requests; and developing a public-facing interactive platform for constituents to offer opinions and feedback on pending legislation. For staff, the MIA could provide for the automation of obtaining bill cosponsors to save staff time and reduce the risk of error; result in a House- and agency-wide staff contact directory so that our staff can better collaborate on policy issues and reach agency contacts they need to answer policy questions; and form a mentorship program for more junior staff to learn from more experienced senior staff. Worth noting, this account also will allow continuity of valuable existing services as well.

Making Congress work better for the American people is a worthwhile investment. On behalf of the former Select Committee on Modernization, and the new Modernization Subcommittee, I greatly appreciate your leadership, partnership, and your consideration of these requests. I am happy to provide additional information as you review these requests. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify before the subcommittee today.